



# 1.0 Introduction and Overview

## 1.1 Sedona: “A Sense of Place”

*A host of subtle and obvious environmental conditions define what residents of Sedona value as “A Sense of Place.”*

Living, working or visiting here involves reacting to red rock vistas complemented by brilliant sunshine and incredibly clear blue skies; experiencing the unique environment of Oak Creek; discovering the delicate fragrance of pinion pines and junipers on National Forest Land, or hearing the joyous night-sounds of coyotes greeting a full moon.

These environmental perceptions are a unique aspect of Sedona for all who come here, even if only for a few days.

People have chosen to live in Sedona for this very special “Sense of Place” and a small-town lifestyle focused sharply on the natural beauty of this area. During every phase of the evolution of the Sedona Community Plan, citizens expressed the need for honoring our surrounding environment – not despoiling it – in many ways, and many times.

Because most present-day Sedona residents have escaped “the fast track” pace of city living, their desire to preserve and enhance Sedona’s “Sense of place” is constantly reinforced by the knowledge that our surroundings are precious and irreplaceable resources.

The many desirable aesthetic qualities and areas with unique local character within Sedona, such as Uptown Sedona, have been closely guarded and nurtured by City programs and initiatives intended to protect the community’s aesthetic qualities and ensure design excellence. Despite this tradition, increasing development pressure for standardized and corporate image driven design solutions threatens the very essence of Sedona’s unique “Sense of Place”.



An important goal of the Design Review Manual is therefore to preserve and enhance Sedona’s unique sense of place, one project at a time.

## 1.2 Applicability

The guidelines presented in this Design Review Manual were created to promote good design that is responsive to its contextual setting. The guidelines outline the City's expectations with regard to the design of new multi-family residential, commercial, lodging and public facility development projects, and are intended to assist applicants in the design of new development proposals, and residents, decision-makers, and staff in the consistent review and consideration of these new developments.

The guidelines are intended for new construction and renovation proposals considered by the Planning and Zoning Commission or through staff approvals. Development proposals will be reviewed with respect to these guidelines in addition to the development regulations provided in the Land Development Code as they may apply.

Design guidelines cannot anticipate the unique potential and/or constraints for each project.

Rather, the purpose of this Design Review Manual is to establish a general direction and a base level of development quality and compatibility with surrounding areas. It is also important to realize that design professionals of all disciplines require a high level of creative energy and a keen sense of understanding of Sedona's uniqueness in order to realize the best in new and redevelopment projects within the City.

## 1.3 Statement of Visions and Goals

*The future of Sedona can be what individuals today are willing to envision for it.*

On November 26, 1991, the Sedona City Council adopted the Sedona Community Plan. This Plan was later amended by the City Council on June 8, 1998. One of the premises of the Community Plan is to relate Sedona's built environment carefully to its diverse natural surroundings. Here are excerpts from the "City of Sedona Vision Statement" in the introduction to the Sedona Community Plan.

*"To be a city that is constantly vigilant over the preservation of its natural beauty, scenic vistas, pristine environment, and cultural heritage.*

*"To be a city that retains its small town atmosphere and creates its man-made character in strict harmony with nature.*



*“To be a city that retains and enhances a strong and vital economy which preserves existing lifestyles without exploiting the natural beauty.”*

*“To be a city that lives up to the challenge of proper stewardship of one of the earth’s greatest treasures.”*

The following head a long list of goals to achieve these vision statements:

#### Land Use/Growth Management Element

GOAL 2.0: *Preserve a small town environment for Sedona’s citizens and visitors.*

GOAL 3.0: *Promote Sedona’s small town community character and quality of life.*

GOAL 4.0: *Provide integration of the manmade with the natural environment.*

#### Environmental Quality Element

GOAL 1.0 *Minimize the negative noise and view impacts of development on the natural environment.*

GOAL 2.0 *Ensure the maintenance of high standards of air and water quality and quantity.*

GOAL 5.0 *Promote compatibility between businesses and the natural environment.*

#### Tourism Element

GOAL 1.0: *Maintain the value of Sedona’s small town character, scenic beauty and natural resources, which are the foundation of our economic strength and quality of life.*

#### Historic Preservation Element

GOAL 1.0: *Integrate historic and archaeological influences into the basic fabric of the community.*

The Land Use Element of the Sedona Community Plan also specifically supports the development of design review standards for multi-family residential, commercial and community facility-related developments in the city in objective statements 3.1 and 3.2.

## 1.4 Understanding the Uniqueness of Sedona

*Sedona is a community with unique assets, opportunities and challenges. New development should respect and enhance Sedona's cultural, historic and environmental uniqueness, rather than detract from it.*

As the Sedona Community Plan evolved through the public participation process, Sedona residents participating in the Community Plan Forums most often expressed the imperatives for future building and development in their community.

These imperatives include:

- Architectural transplants from other locales are not appropriate here. Sedona's residents and visitors expect a uniquely distinctive built environment and architectural form as a result of the characteristics of its unparalleled natural environment and geographic location.
- Our natural environment deserves authenticity and integrity in our built environment.
- Commercial, public facility, and multi-family residential developments can be designed with architectural character that accommodates structures in harmony with their natural surroundings.
- "Franchise/monoculture" (corporate signature) buildings and shallow or artificial imitations of "Western" architectural styles are not desirable.
- Natural structural rhythms, balanced proportions and sensitively selected color schemes can enhance our environmental surroundings.
- A sense of community is fundamental to the small town character of Sedona. Commercial development should allow for and encourage pedestrian participation and interaction along its primary streets and public corridors.
- Careful site planning is the essential basis for designing and building structures on sensitive, often difficult terrain.

Sedona residents value what we like to call our "small town atmosphere or character". While this may be hard to define, it is nonetheless very important to those who call Sedona "home". Many have observed that Sedona's "small town atmosphere or character" has been significantly eroded and reduced as the city has grown and developed; however, many more local residents, whether "old-timers" or relatively new comers to the community, would strongly argue that we need to



maintain and build on our sense of “small town atmosphere or character” because it was this character and quality of lifestyle that helped to draw so many to this unique red rock community. Human values, perceptions and relationships are also very important in fostering and building a sense of “small town character”, but these are beyond the scope of this Design Review Manual.

In reading this Design Review Manual, it should become apparent that Sedona residents value the natural uniqueness of their city and its “small town atmosphere and character”. This has been achieved in our built environment by, for example, encouraging uniqueness in architectural design so that typical franchise fast food architecture is not found here, buildings are designed at a human scale, signs are understated and frequently have become artistic expressions, indigenous and historic materials are utilized in the design of our buildings, and landscaped courtyards with fountains and seating areas have become popular gathering places. A key objective of the Design Review Manual is to foster and maintain our sense of “small town atmosphere or character” through the use of appropriate and sensitive design strategies that will help to enhance human relationships as well as blend the built environment with the natural environment.



photo by Jensvold-Thompson Architects



## 1.5 The Creative Challenge for Designers, Developers, and Builders

*Any community must adapt to change, if it is to have a sustainable future. Our expanding human habitat in Sedona presents rare creative opportunities for architects, designers, developers and builders. The challenge is to design human spaces respecting the small town character and irreplaceable beauty that are the essence of Sedona's unique "Sense of Place".*

The citizen-volunteers of the Design Review Manual Committee were appointed by the City of Sedona Planning and Zoning Commission in late fall, 1990, charged with a difficult task: To develop a Design Review Manual that would be used by City staff and the Planning and Zoning Commission to review and evaluate multi-family residential, commercial and public facility development projects, that would compliment our City and be in accord with the Vision and Goals of the Community Plan.

Through many months of work, the emphasis has been to encourage, or suggest – rather than prohibit, restrict and arbitrarily require how buildings should be designed, built, and sited. Early on, the committee agreed that a Design Review Manual for Sedona should fully explain and illustrate how structures should reflect our community-wide sensitivity and respect for a fragile and sensitive environment.

Above all, the committee's efforts focused on a "user-friendly" approach, suggesting design alternatives for commercial and multi-family buildings, siting, and landscaping that would be most appropriate for Sedona. This Design Review Manual has been developed with the idea of setting reasonable standards and encouraging more than minimal attention to the many specific details of architectural design, land development, and building construction than can enhance Sedona's "Sense of Place".

As a guide to developers of projects unfamiliar with the City of Sedona's review and approval procedures, Chapter 6.0 of this manual explains the procedures and submittal requirements for the review and approval of projects subject to Development Review, pursuant to Section 401 of the City of Sedona Land Development Code and based on the design standards provided in this manual.

Key objectives of the City of Sedona Design Review Manual include:

- Supporting the intent of the Sedona Area Sensitive Design Principles.



- Protecting and enhancing the character and quality of commercial areas while maintaining and strengthening a recognizable identity and character that is unique to Sedona.
- Enhancing the human level of commercial developments and respect the scale and character of residential neighborhoods that adjoin commercial uses.
- Mitigating the negative visual impacts arising from the scale, bulk and mass inherent to large commercial buildings.
- Strengthening the pedestrian environment and improve access to alternative transportation solutions, including future public transit.
- Promoting building designs and techniques that are adaptable to redevelopment projects for existing buildings.
- Minimizing negative impacts from on-site activities to adjacent uses, especially residential uses.
- Balancing the economic requirements of new development with aesthetic concerns of the community.
- Fostering and maintaining our sense of “small town atmosphere or character” through the use of appropriate and sensitive design strategies that will help to enhance human relationships as well as blend the built environment with the natural environment.

## 1.6 Sedona Area Sensitive Design Principles

*Sedona Area Sensitive Design Principles have their core value in the belief that development should respect and enhance the unique red rock landforms, climate, topography, vegetation and historical context of Sedona’s natural forest and creek environments. All are considered amenities that help sustain our community and its quality of life. These Sensitive Design Principles are the essence of and foundation for the guidelines and design issues further described in this Design Review Manual.*

- 1. The design character of any area of Sedona should be enhanced and strengthened by new development in the following ways:**
  - Building design should consider the distinctive qualities and character of the surrounding context and, as appropriate, incorporate those qualities in its design.
  - Building design should be sensitive to the evolving context of an area over time.
  - Building design should reflect the logical and true qualities of its character and structure in its appearance.
  - Building design should be consistent with the City of Sedona’s vision of maintaining small town character as expressed in its architecture, building form and placement and urban landscape.



- 2. Development, through appropriate siting and orientation of buildings, should recognize and preserve established major vistas, as well as protect natural and man-made features, such as with:**
  - Scenic views of the Mogollon Rim and other significant Sedona red rock landmarks.
  - Archaeological and historical resources.
- 3. Development should be sensitive to existing topography and landscaping.**
  - The design of a new development should respond to the unique terrain and character of the site by blending with the natural shape and texture of the land while minimizing disturbances to the natural environment.
- 4. Development should protect the character of the Sedona environment by preserving and restoring natural habitats and ecological processes.**
- 5. The design of the public realm, i.e. streetscapes, parks, plazas and civic amenities, is an opportunity to provide identity to the community and to convey its design expectations.**
  - Streetscapes should provide continuity among adjacent uses through use of cohesive landscaping, decorative paving, street furniture, public art and integrated infrastructure elements.
- 6. Developments should integrate alternative modes of transportation, including bicycle and bus access, within the pedestrian network that encourages social contact and interaction within the community.**
  - Broad based redevelopment of existing substandard areas is encouraged, including for example, alignment of right-of-ways, pedestrian easements and connections and drainage ways.
- 7. Development should show consideration for the pedestrian by providing landscaping and shading elements as well as inviting access connections to adjacent developments.**
  - Design elements should be included to reflect human scale and comfort, such as the use of shelter and shade for the pedestrian and a variety of building masses.
- 8. Buildings should be designed with a logical hierarchy of masses:**
  - To control the visual impact of a building's height and size.
  - To highlight important building volumes and features, such as the building entry, and.
  - To control the perceived heaviness an/or massiveness of a building, consideration should be given to providing weight (via use of materials, textures, color, or architectural elements) at the base of a building to minimize its perceived heaviness or massiveness as the building rises in elevation.

- 9. The design of the built environment should respond to Sedona's natural environment:**
- Interior spaces should be extended into the outdoors both physically and visually when appropriate.
  - Natural materials, with colors and coarse textures associated with this region, should be utilized. The use of natural sandstone is encouraged.
  - A variety of textures and natural materials should be used to provide visual interest and richness, particularly at the pedestrian level. Materials should be used honestly and reflect their inherent qualities.
  - Features such as shade structures, deep roof overhangs and recessed windows should be incorporated.
- 10. Developments should strive to incorporate sustainable and healthy building practices and products.**
- Design strategies and building techniques should be utilized which minimize environmental impact, reduce energy consumption and endure over time.
- 11. Landscape design should respond to Sedona's natural environment by utilizing a variety of mature landscape materials indigenous to this semi-arid region.**
- The character of the area should be emphasized through the careful selection of planting materials in terms of scale, density, and arrangement.
  - The landscaping should compliment the built environment while relating to its various uses.
  - The recommended plant palette provides many varying colors and textures that can be used to compliment a building. Landscaping should be used as an extension of the building's overall design.
- 12. Site design should incorporate techniques for efficient water use by providing desert-adapted landscaping and preserving native plants.**
- Water, as a landscape element, should be used judiciously.
  - Water features should be placed in locations with high pedestrian activity.
- 13. The extent and quality of lighting should be integrally designed as part of the built environment.**
- A balance should occur between the ambient light levels and designated focal lighting needs.
  - Lighting should be designed to minimize glare and invasive overflow, to conserve energy, and to reflect the character of the area.
  - Lighting should provide a dual purpose – to be functional and provide necessary nighttime illumination as well as to define the architectural character of a building or project.